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Anne Arundel County

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Joint Committee on Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

October 2, 2012

The Honorable John R. Leopold
County Executive
Anne Arundel County
44 Calvert Street
MS 1400
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Mr. Leopold,

It is with a heavy heart that I write you, but I believe action must be taken to help restore the trust of Anne Arundel County residents.

Over the last several years, Anne Arundel County's political trust has been severely tainted by the recent conviction of a local councilman for tax evasion, the numerous and persistent allegations of misconduct by your office and other activities by local politicians.

A week does not go by without another report surfacing to describe the details surrounding the allegations against you. However, this past week revealed another disturbing fact that the taxpayers of Anne Arundel County will have to pay for all legal costs associated with defending you against these allegations, independent of guilt or innocence. The legal defense cost is in addition to any potential cost awarded by a court case against the county for your alleged actions.

I, along with most of my constituents, understand the need for this provision in the law when an elected official is found innocent. However, it is a completely different matter if an elected official is guilty and taxpayers are required to pick up their financial legal tab.

According to news reports, the private legal counsel that is defending you is charging up to \$450 per hour with colossal costs projected, if the case goes to trial. Just this past week, the county taxpayers were charged over \$20,000 for these legal services.

To put this into perspective, two hours of your legal services are costing our county more than many residents make in a whole week. Residents are struggling to make their monthly bills and they do not want these exorbitant lawyer fees evidentially added to their tax bills.

By current law, as a county employee, the county is obligated to pay for these billable hours in your defense. However, many of my constituency is outraged by the cost to the county for these services, most notably if it turns out that a guilty verdict is returned in your case.

Therefore, I am calling for your immediate, voluntary and public pledge that you will repay the taxpayers for both the legal costs and any court awarded judgments against the county for your actions, if and only if, you are found guilty of any of these allegations against you.

In your case, you have repeatedly denied any wrong doing and if that is true, there is little risk of you being personally held responsible.

This is a matter of integrity and fiscal responsibility to our taxpayers which by a matter of fact has often been the mantra of your past election promises. Therefore, not only is this the responsible action to take, it is the morally right thing to do.

I promised to protect the integrity of the office and the taxpayers of Anne Arundel County and this is the motivation of my letter to you.

I am confident this is the necessary action to right a faltering political ship. It is my hope that you will alleviate our taxpayer's financial anxieties and take the leadership needed in this unraveling situation and make the pledge.

Sincerely,



Senator Bryan W. Simonaire

BWS/mz

